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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF
SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
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PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIRST GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES ON THE BASIS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/189 AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT OTHER RELEVANT GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS

Activities of the Conference secretariat and other matters

Report of the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present report deals with a number of subject areas relating to preparations for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. These are:

(a) Establishment of a Conference secretariat;

(b) Preparations by the host Government;

(c) Dates for the Conference;

(d) Public information programme;

(e) Non-governmental organizations;

(f) Operations of the voluntary fund;

(g) Sustainable development technology exhibition.

I. ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT

2. In its resolution 47/189 entitled "Convening of a global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States", the General Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to provide, within the context of the administrative arrangements to be put in place to coordinate the implementation of Agenda 21 and the servicing of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and in close cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other relevant organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, a focal point with a senior official at an appropriate level and with the specialized expertise necessary to service fully the preparations for and holding of the Conference and such follow-up action as may result therefrom. In paragraph 49 of his statement (A/C.5/47/81) on the related programme budget implications of this resolution, among others, the Secretary-General indicated that as regards the secretariat support of the preparatory process for the Conference, Professional staff, including the D-1 and P-4 levels, and staff at the General Service level, would be required.

3. Following further review of the requirements for the Conference and taking account of the resources available to the new Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat, the Secretary-General has decided to locate the Conference secretariat within that Department. The Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development has assumed responsibility for providing overall direction and guidance to the preparations for the Conference. The task of focal point has been assigned to a Director within the Department who is being supported by a complement consisting of two staff at the P-4 level and one at the P-3 level, and complementary General Service staff. In addition, funding has been provided

by the Governments of Australia ($A 120,000) and New Zealand ($NZ 50,000) to cover the services of a consultant on a full-time basis, for a period of a year, to provide additional technical support to the Conference secretariat.

4. The activities of the Conference secretariat have been grouped into the following four basic components:

(a) Preparation of substantive documentation for the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Conference;

(b) Organizational and logistic arrangements for the Conference;

(c) Public outreach activities including promotional work with the media and the non-governmental community;

(d) Fund-raising for and administration of the voluntary fund for assisting small island developing States and the least developed countries to participate in the Conference and its preparatory process.

5. With a view to drawing on the knowledge and expertise of concerned organizations and in order to ensure effective coordination in the preparations for the Conference, a Conference Management Committee has been established at United Nations Headquarters under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. The departments and offices represented on the Conference Management Committee are: the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat, the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of General Services of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of Conference Services of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme and the regional commissions' New York Liaison Office. Away from Headquarters, all organizations of the United Nations system have been asked to identify focal points for the Conference and, where they do not exist, to establish permanent focal point arrangements for activities connected with the sustainable development of small island developing States. The mechanism of focal points was fully drawn upon and proved its value in the preparation of the substantive documentation for the Conference.

II. PREPARATIONS BY THE HOST GOVERNMENT

6. Consistent with standard practice, a planning mission from the United Nations visited Barbados from 24 to 26 May 1993 to hold consultations with the host Government on preparations for the Conference. The mission held discussions on a number of issues including conference facilities, staffing requirements, transportation, hotel accommodations, financing, public information, exhibitions, security, non-governmental organizations, protocol and social events and hospitality.

7. The work of the mission was conducted with the Barbados National Planning Committee for the Conference which has been established under chairmanship at the level of a Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister. As a result of the discussions held, a decision was taken to hold the Conference at the Sherbourne Centre, which is as yet unfinished. When completed, the Centre will comprise a conference centre, an administration building and an auditorium. The Government of Barbados plans to complete the conference centre and the administration building in time for the Conference. The conference centre will be able to provide facilities for conducting simultaneously a plenary meeting and one parallel meeting of plenary size. The Plenary Hall will be able to seat 248 at table, with 248 advisers' seats behind. The second conference room will have similar facilities. The planning mission has also proposed to the host Government that a third, smaller room with interpretation facilities should be made available in order to accommodate large regional group and other similar meetings. Non-governmental organization activities will take place at a site close to the Sherbourne Centre. At the same time, the necessary arrangements will be made to facilitate access by accredited non-governmental organizations to the conference centre for the purpose of their participation in the work of the Conference.

8. The United Nations planning mission came away from its visit to Barbados deeply impressed at the determination of the Barbados authorities to provide the necessary facilities for a successful Conference. The planning mission noted the need for the resources of the society to be carefully marshalled in order to ensure a suitable infrastructure and appropriate arrangements for what will probably be the largest international gathering ever to have taken place in the Caribbean and certainly the largest ever to have taken place in a country the size of Barbados. For its part, the United Nations Secretariat is in the process of reviewing its requirements in order to see if innovative and flexible approaches can be devised that will minimize the cost to the Government while at the same time meeting the necessary minimal standards for a global conference.

9. It may be anticipated that two further planning missions will be necessary between the convening of the first session of the Preparatory Committee and the opening of the Conference.

III. DATES FOR THE CONFERENCE

10. In its resolution 47/189, the General Assembly decided to convene the Conference in April 1994. However, no decision has as yet been taken as to the exact dates for the Conference. On the basis of consultations held during the visit of the United Nations planning mission to Barbados, it was agreed that with respect to dates, the period from 25 April to 6 May 1994 should be proposed. The question of whether the Conference should be preceded by pre-conference consultations lasting for two days, as has been the practice with other conferences, is a matter that the Preparatory Committee will need to address.

IV. PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAMME

11. An effective public information programme is an important element in ensuring the success of the Conference. While there can be no expectation that the media attention given to the Conference will in any way approach that of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, it must be recognized that a United Nations conference whose goals and purposes are not widely advertised and understood is unlikely to produce an outcome that will prove to be enduring. It will be necessary, therefore, to conduct a public information campaign that will elucidate persuasively the need for such a conference and the reason why it must be global in scope.

12. Taking the above into account, the Conference secretariat and the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat plan to implement an information programme as described below.

Themes and target audiences

13. The public information and promotional activities for the Conference will concentrate on the key sustainable development issues identified in section G of chapter 17 of Agenda 21 1/ and General Assembly resolution 47/189, as further elaborated in the Preparatory Committee. Public information and public affairs activities will include the following target audiences:

(a) The populations of small island developing States themselves, in order to provide them with information in depth about the issues under consideration and the role of the United Nations system;

(b) Public and private sector decision makers and non-governmental organizations in the partner countries of developing island States (that is, traditional donor countries and especially those whose territory includes islands, significant regional players in the transport, communications and other relevant industries) to sensitize them to the special needs of island developing countries in pursuit of sustainable development;

(c) Major international media and non-governmental organizations in general, in particular to keep in the public eye the issues and results of the Earth Summit as they apply to small island developing States.

Strategy

14. Information activities and materials during the period extending from August to December 1993 will concentrate on raising public awareness about the Conference and the issues before it. This phase will be directed at island communities, including opinion leaders and the media, their principal regional partners and donor countries.

15. The global element of the information programme, including release of radio and audiovisual material over national and international networks, will be produced during the final stage of Conference preparations (January-March 1994) and will emphasize continuity with the Earth Summit and the objectives set out in Agenda 21.

16. The Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat will seek to collaborate closely with national and regional media organizations, particularly the broadcast media.

Inter-agency cooperation

17. The Department of Public Information will seek the collaboration of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system in outreach, and production and distribution of audiovisual and print material, to the maximum extent possible.

Products and activities

18. Specific elements of the information programme will include:

(a) Radio. A series of special radio features highlighting key issues before the Conference will be prepared by the United Nations Radio in the relevant languages for dissemination/broadcast in island countries and placed with national and regional media networks through existing Department of Public Information channels, United Nations information centres and United Nations Development Programme offices, where appropriate;

(b) Television. United Nations television will produce at least two UN in Action programmes and a 30-minute documentary in time for the Conference. Air time will be sought through the appropriate commercial and state broadcasting networks. United Nations television is pursuing co-production possibilities with regional and global broadcasting partners. Arrangements to share footage with other producers will also be encouraged. Contacts will be made with other agencies of the United Nations system and programmes in this regard;

(c) Print:

(i) Print materials to be produced by the Department of Public Information prior to the Conference will include a brochure and a background document on the preparatory process and the Conference itself;

(ii) A colour poster will be produced for distribution through United Nations information centres and other United Nations system field offices to non-governmental organizations, schools and other channels;

(iii) A press kit, incorporating feature articles/fact sheets contributed by the other agencies of the United Nations system, will then be compiled, along with additional data of specific interest to journalists, for distribution immediately prior to the Conference itself;

(iv) A summary of the final document and other outcomes of the Conference will be published by the Department of Public Information and widely distributed;

(d) Special events. Programmes to mark International Women's Day (8 March 1994) and World Day for Water (22 March 1994) will incorporate elements to highlight the Conference and the priority issues before it;

(e) Logo. A masthead will be developed for the Conference, incorporating the existing Earth Summit logo and will be used on all materials developed for this event;

(f) Non-governmental organization and public outreach. Potential co-sponsoring partners will be sought (through contacts with Governments, United Nations information centres and other United Nations system offices, in consultation with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat) for promotional or public affairs activities. For example:

(i) Suitable firms or associations in the transport, telecommunications and tourism industries will be approached about underwriting the cost of producing and placing posters featuring the Conference issues at points of departure and arrival in island countries themselves, and in continental transit points. In-flight magazines and trade publications will also be encouraged to carry features or coverage relating to the Conference;

(ii) Youth-oriented non-governmental organizations and educators will be encouraged to undertake "people-to-people" projects before and after the Conference involving the youth of island countries and their contemporaries in other islands or target mainland States;

(iii) In the period extending from January to March 1994, a special briefing session will be held at United Nations Headquarters for representatives of major non-governmental organizations concerned with sustainable development. Briefings on sustainable development organized at Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Geneva for non-governmental organizations, youth and educators will feature the Conference.

Conference coverage

19. Arrangements will be made with the host country and the Conference secretariat to ensure that the Department of Public Information is provided with adequate facilities for press, radio and television coverage of the Conference itself.

V. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

20. It is expected that the Conference will attract considerable interest in the non-governmental community and that a good number of non-governmental organizations will attend the Conference. In addition, the Conference should provide the opportunity for increased non-governmental networking, particularly in the Caribbean and South Pacific regions. It may also be anticipated that the prospect of the Conference will stimulate the creation of new non-governmental organizations. The opportunity should also be taken to establish or intensify, as appropriate, cross-regional or interoceanic non-governmental organization linkages. During its visit to Barbados, the United Nations planning mission had identified the importance of the Barbadian non-governmental organizations community's establishing at an early date a national non-governmental organization coordinating committee that would liaise with small island

developing States' non-governmental organization groups as well as international non-governmental organization groups.

21. A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) mission, in which the Conference secretariat participated, visited Barbados from 27 July to 2 August 1993 to assist the authorities in Barbados, inter alia, with the establishment of an electronic non-governmental organization network, to be called the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET). The establishment of SIDSNET would be in conformity with the provisions of chapter 17 of Agenda 21 which calls for interregional and intraregional cooperation between small island developing States, and those of chapter 40 which emphasizes the importance of better networks for the dissemination of sustainable development information. The purpose of SIDSNET will be to:

(a) Enable small islands to exchange ideas, documentation and other information in a timely manner;

(b) Enable various publics in small islands to discuss and exchange ideas and views on issues of common concern;

(c) Provide the vehicle through which the various research and policy institutions in small islands can exchange views, ideas, documents and general information of relevance to small islands and their sustainable development;

(d) Mitigate geographical remoteness by providing international electronic connectivity and access to international information services;

(e) Provide a mechanism through which ideas on future technologies could be exchanged. As such, SIDSNET will also be an important forum to gather ideas on the sustainable development technology exhibition (see sect. VII).

22. SIDSNET should be operational as soon as possible, preferably by the time of the first session of the Preparatory Committee, to begin in August 1993. An entity is to be identified or established in Barbados that will have prime responsibility for the provision of relevant information on the SIDSNET and will also coordinate and stimulate its further development. A possible operational entity could be the concept of a regional sustainable technology centre agreed to at the Regional Technical Meeting for the Caribbean/Atlantic/Mediterranean regions. Such a mechanism could evolve with important functional linkages to the Centre for Sustainable Development, Mona Campus (Jamaica), University of the West Indies. It is expected that UNDP will provide support for the establishment of the network.

23. With regard to accreditation of non-governmental organizations to the Preparatory Committee and to the Conference itself and in the light of the decisions taken at the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee, the Secretary-General is proceeding on the basis that any non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council or with the Commission on Sustainable Development (roster) will be automatically provided accreditation upon request. The Secretariat has sought to disseminate widely information on the process of accreditation to the Preparatory Committee and the Conference. A report will be submitted to the Preparatory Committee

containing a list of additional non-governmental organizations that are seeking accreditation to the Preparatory Committee and the Conference itself.

VI. OPERATIONS OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND

24. In paragraph 20 of its resolution 47/189, the General Assembly decided to establish a voluntary fund for the purpose of assisting small island developing States and the least developed countries to participate fully and effectively in the Conference and its preparatory process, and invited Governments to contribute to the fund. In a note verbale dated 11 May 1993, the Secretary-General informed Member States of the establishment of the voluntary fund and requested contributions to it. As of the date of preparation of the present report, the following contributions have been received:

Chile	1,000 US dollars
Sweden	100,000 US dollars

25. The following written pledges have been received:

Canada	50,000 Canadian dollars
Italy	150 million lire
Liechtenstein	1,000 Swiss francs
New Zealand	25,000 New Zealand dollars

26. The Secretary-General had sought contributions in the amount of US$ 950,000 in order to finance the participation of one representative from all small island developing States and least developed countries to attend the sessions of the Preparatory Committee and the Conference itself. It is hoped that additional contributions to the fund will be received in order to facilitate effective participation by small island developing States and least developed countries at the Conference itself. In addition to the contributions noted above, Australia has provided $A 200,000 through the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to facilitate participation by the Pacific Island countries in the Conference and its preparatory process.

VII. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY EXHIBITION (SDTE)

27. On the basis of discussions that were held between the Government of Barbados and the UNDP mission to Barbados (in which the Conference secretariat participated), arrangements have been initiated for an exhibition on various aspects of sustainable development to be mounted in Barbados during the course of the Conference. The exhibition would be an event parallel to the Conference and should provide an opportunity for Conference participants to be exposed to technologies and issues directly relevant to the sustainable development of small islands.

28. Essentially, the exhibition will be centred around science, technology and knowledge relevant for sustainable development and will focus on "fugitive" technologies (technologies currently escaping application), mature (commercially available) technologies and indigenous knowledge and techniques. Important themes to be highlighted are environment-friendly technology, ethics and ideas

relevant to sustainable development, education for sustainable development, importance of art and culture to the promotion of sustainable development, the law and the environment, and role models representing examples of sustainable development. Themes will be arranged around the concept of the "Village of Hope", symbolic of the effort to harness the best technologies and ideas for sustainable development for the good of the "Global Village".

29. The exhibits will be drawn with some degree of balance from both the developed and the developing countries and will highlight specifically the contribution of indigenous peoples to sustainable development, in particular their technologies and knowledge. Exhibits that are of direct relevance to the small island developing States will form the bulk of the exhibition without prejudice to exhibits of global relevance.

30. The exhibition will be private sector-driven and to this end the private sector of Barbados and the international private sector will play a leading role in organizing the exhibition. It is also anticipated that specialized agencies of the United Nations system will make specific contributions in their respective fields of competence, such as advanced agricultural, industrial and health technologies. Consideration may also be given to inviting leading international environmental non-governmental organizations to contribute to the exhibition.

31. Several sites are currently under consideration as possible venues for the exhibition. The site selection process will be finalized by the end of August 1993.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8), resolution 1, annex II.